

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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OES-06 FEAE-00 ERDA-05 AID-05 /107 W
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R 051624Z APR 77
FM AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4781
INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 RIO DE JANEIRO 1588

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS : PINS PINT BR
SUBJECT : COMMENTS OF MINAS GERAIS GOVERNOR AURELIANO CHAVES
ON INTERNAL POLITICS AND US RELATIONS

RIO DE JANEIRO 1529, SENT ACTION BRASILIA INFO SAO PAULO,
APRIL 2, 1977, IS REPEATED FOR DEPARTMENT ACTION. AN EMBASSY
COMMENT IS APPENDED.

QUOTE

CONFIDENTIAL RIO DE JANEIRO 1529

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS : PINS PINT BR
SUBJECT : COMMENTS OF MINAS GERAIS GOVERNOR CHAVES ON
INTERNAL POLITICS AND US RELATIONS

1. DURING A TRIP TO BELO HORIZONTE YESTERDAY, I CALLED ON
GOVERNOR CHAVES, ACCOMPANIED BY FRED EXTON, AND HAD AN INTER-
ESTING 45-MINUTE CONVERSATION. THE GOVERNOR WAS FRIENDLY AS
ALWAYS BUT APPEARED TENSE AND PREOCCUPIED. HE TOOK THE INITIATIVE
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IN COMMENTING EXTENSIVELY WITH APPARENT FRANKNESS ON BRAZILIAN
INTERNAL POLITICAL PROBLEMS AND RELATIONS WITH U.S.

2. CHAVES IS DEEPLY WORRIED ABOUT PRESENT INTERNAL SITUATION.
THE PARLIAMENTARY DEADLOCK OVER THE JUDICIAL REFORM AMENDMENT
HAS CREATED AN IMPASSE FROM WHICH HE SEES NO WAY OUT AND THE
SITUATION IS EXACERBATED BY PROBLEMS WITH U.S. OVER HUMAN

RIGHTS AND NUCLEAR QUESTIONS. HE THINKS THE SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY IS EXTREMELY TENSE AND THAT THE MAKINGS ARE PRESENT FOR A BLOODY INTERNAL STRIFE.

3. THE GOVERNOR BEGAN WITH A LENGTHY ANALYSIS OF ARMY ATTITUDES, UNDERSCORING ITS DEEP ANTI-COMMUNIST COMMITMENT AND ITS PREOCCUPATION WITH INTERNAL ORDER AND NATIONAL UNITY. WITH ITS BROAD RECRUITMENT BASE AND THE MIDDLE CLASS CHARACTER OF ITS OFFICERS, THE ARMY IS NOT READILY MOBILIZABLE ON TRANSIENT POLITICAL ISSUES BUT UNITES FOR FIRM ACTION WHEN THOSE FACTORS ARE PRESENT AS IT PERCEIVES THEM TO BE TODAY.

4. CHAVES THEN DESCRIBED GEISEL'S CHARACTER, PRAISING HIM AS A STATESMAN WITH BEST OF INTENTIONS REGARDING EVOLUTION OF BRAZILIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM. HOWEVER, HE IS ALSO A MILITARY MAN AND IF FORCED TO CHOOSE BETWEEN REACTING AS A "CITIZEN" OR "SOLDIER", HE WILL ALWAYS CHOOSE THE LATTER. IN THE PRESENT INSTANCE, IN HIS REACTION TO THE MDB CHALLENGE ON HIS PROPOSED JUDICIAL REFORM AMENDMENT, HE IS ACTING AS A SOLDIER FOR WHOM POLITICAL ISSUES ARE NOT SUBJECTS FOR NEGOTIATION OR COMPROMISE; IT'S WIN OR LOSE, AND DEFEATS CANNOT BE ACCEPTED.

5. AGAINST THIS PRESIDENTIAL AND MILITARY MENTAL CAST, THE MDB BROUGHT THEIR LATEST CHALLENGE, ACTING ON THE INSPIRATION OF THE PARTY'S RADICALS AND FIRED BY THE INFUSION OF NEW POLITICIANS SWEEPED IN BY THE 1974 "FLOOD". THESE RADICALS, MANY OF THEM VERY BRIGHT, ARE IN TURN STIRRED UP BY A SMALL NUMBER OF COMMUNISTS AMONG THEM. UNLIKE THE MDB MODERATES, THE EX-PESSEDISTAS, THEY LIKE THE MILITARY DO NOT UNDERSTAND

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THE NEED FOR COMPROMISE BUT PREFER CONFRONTATIONS ON PRINCIPLE. THE ISSUE POSED BY THE JUDICIAL REFORM BILL WAS THUS SEEN AS A COMMUNIST CHALLENGE TO THE MILITARY.

6. THIS CLASH UNFORTUNATELY OCCURRED AT A TIME WHEN INTERNAL TENSIONS WERE ALREADY HIGH OVER US-BRAZIL RELATIONS, INCLUDING THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE. AS A THEORY, CHAVES SAID HE WAS "TOYING" WITH THE IDEA THAT THE US HUMAN RIGHTS OFFENSIVE AND THE GENERAL INTERNATIONAL ATMOSPHERE HAD CONTRIBUTED TO THE INTERNAL CRISIS. UNDER THIS THEORY THE RADICAL/COMMUNIST WING OF THE MDB THOUGHT THE MOMENT PROPITIOUS TO "TEST" THE GOVERNMENT TO SEE IF IT COULD BE FORCED TO YIELD WITHOUT FORCEFUL REACTION FOR THE SAKE OF ITS INTERNATIONAL IMAGE.

7. WITH THE FIRM GOVERNMENT'S REACTION, INCLUDING THE REJECTION OF CONGRESS, CHAVES FEARS THAT THE SITUATION WILL DETERIORATE WITH BOTH THE GOVERNMENT AND LEFTIST OPPOSITION DRIVEN TO MORE EXTREME POSITIONS. THIS WILL, IN TURN, PUSH

THE GOVERNMENT TO MORE REPRESSIVE ACTIONS IN HUMAN RIGHTS AND FURTHER WIDEN DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BRAZIL AND THE UNITED STATES. IN THIS ATMOSPHERE OF INTERNAL TENSION, US ACTIONS COULD BE CRUCIAL IN DETERMINING WHETHER THERE IS AN EXPLOSION OR NOT. HE HOPES THE US WILL NOT PRESS FURTHER ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS FRONT. HE ACCEPTS THE SINCERITY OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S INTENTIONS BUT HOPES THE ADMINISTRATION WILL UNDERSTAND THAT THE US CANNOT APPLY THE "PALMATORIA" TO BRAZIL OVER THIS SUBJECT.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 RIO DE JANEIRO 1588

8. LIKEWISE ON THE NUCLEAR MATTER, HE HOPES WASHINGTON WILL GO EASY ON BRAZIL. HE EMPHASIZED IN THIS CONNECTION HIS VIEW THAT THE PROPER TARGET FOR US PRESSURE WAS GERMANY AND NOT BRAZIL BECAUSE IT WAS THE FORMER THAT WAS VIOLATING ITS COMMITMENT REGARDING SENSITIVE TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER UNDER THE NPT, OF WHICH BRAZIL IS NOT A SIGNATORY. ON THAT SUBJECT, INCIDENTALLY, CHAVES SAID HE HAD ALWAYS FAVORED BRAZIL'S ADHERENCE TO THE NPT AND STILL DID.

9. COMMENT: I COMMENTED VERY LITTLE DURING THE COURSE OF THE GOVERNOR'S REMARKS BUT DID POINT OUT THAT, IN MY JUDGMENT, HE MISUNDERSTOOD THE US POSITION IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE IN BRAZIL, WHICH I CHARACTERIZED AS A "FALSE PROBLEM" INsofar AS RECENT EVENTS ARE CONCERNED. MENTIONING A FEW BACKGROUND FACTS, I SAID THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION HAD NOT TAKEN ANY ACTIONS AGAINST BRAZIL IN THIS FIELD OR TRIED TO ASSERT PRESSURE THROUGH THE HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT OR MILITARY AID PROGRAM OR ANY OTHER WAY.

10. CHAVES THROUGHOUT THE CONVERSATION SHOWED A FRIENDLY DISPOSITION TOWARD THE US AND CONCLUDED WITH REMARKS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR TWO COUNTRIES' FINDING A WAY TO BRIDGE
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CURRENT DIFFERENCES FOR THE SAKE OF OUR BASIC LONG-TERM INTERESTS.

I WAS IMPRESSED BY HIS PESSIMISM, BORDERING ON DESPAIR, ABOUT THE INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION. IN PAST CONTACTS I HAVE NEVER NOTED A DISPOSITION TO EITHER SENSATIONALISM OR GLOOM. END COMMENT.

UNQUOTE

BEGIN EMBASSY COMMENT: WE CONSIDER CHAVES A WELL-PLACED AND WELL-INFORMED SOURCE WHOSE VIEWS SHOULD BE REGARDED AS REVEALING OF THE UNCERTAINTY AND PESSIMISM THAT SEEM TO FURTHER INCREASE IN HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL CIRCLES SINCE THE MARCH 30 CONGRESSIONAL DEADLOCK (BRASILIA 2582). GOVERNOR OF THE IMPORTANT STATE OF MINAS GERAIS SINCE 1974, AURELIANO CHAVES IS A MODERATE, AN ADVOCATE OF POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION AND CLOSE PERSONALLY TO GEISEL. HE IS CONSIDERED TO BE ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE OF THE CURRENT STATE GOVERNORS. DURING THE PERIOD OF INTERNAL DEBATE AND SPECULATION OVER THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF GEISEL'S POLITICAL REFORMS THAT FOLLOWED THE NOVEMBER, 1976, ELECTIONS, CHAVES WAS ONE OF A FEW STATE GOVERNORS WHO SPOKE OUT FOR COMPLIANCE WITH THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISION OF DIRECT ELECTIONS IN 1978. CHAVES' COMMENTS ABOUT GEISEL'S MILITARY PREDISPOSITION IN CONFRONTING A POLITICAL CHALLENGE PARALLEL THOSE NOW FREQUENTLY HEARD IN BRASILIA. SIMILARLY, HIS SPECULATION THAT THE MDB, OR ITS RADICAL WING, MAY HAVE BEEN ENCOURAGED BY THE US HUMAN RIGHTS POSITION TO TEST THE GOVERNMENT ALSO PARTAKES OF PREVALENT THINKING IN SOME HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL AND MILITARY CIRCLES IN BRASILIA. END EMBASSY COMMENT.
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